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ANPA NEWS RESEARCH REPORT

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A REPORT FOR EDITORS PROVIDED IN COORDINATION WITH THE NEWSPAPER READERSHIP COUNCIL

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Editorial _____
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Research Programs

Minneapolis Meets New Information Needs

HIGHLIGHTS: Information on newspaper readership can be useful in forming strategies to make newspapers more appealing to readers and to enhance circulation prospects. However, readership is a very complex phenomenon, and results of readership projects need to be analyzed in ways that do justice to that complexity. Analysis of more than 16,000 interviews conducted for the readership project of The Minneapolis Star and Tribune newspapers has focused on three ways to deal with this complexity:

- Analysis of the ways that article characteristics interact with one another to influence readership
- Comparison of readership patterns, intensity of readership, and amount of current coverage to arrive at a working model for space allocation
- Analysis of the ways readers cluster into distinct audiences and the kinds of content that work best to attract and keep those audiences.

Ottaway Completes Three-Phase Study

HIGHLIGHTS: Newspapers in 11 smaller markets have completed more than 6,000 interviews using in-house resources and a team of Syracuse University researchers. This report outlines the procedures for this program of research and the results of each phase. In phase one, reports were written for each market. Phase two involved the preparation of comparative reports comparing all the markets. In the third phase, which is continuing, extra dividends in the form of new knowledge and perspectives began to appear. The final portion of this ANPA report looks at one of these dividends, the impact on newspaper readership of such attitudes as perceived accuracy, adequacy of local government coverage and overall satisfaction with the newspaper.

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Minneapolis Meets New Information Needs

By Kristin McGrath

Dr. Kristin McGrath is the research director of The Minneapolis Star and Tribune Co.

Readership studies have been part of the newspaper research repertoire for as long as formal newspaper research has existed. At The Minneapolis Star and Tribune newspapers, such studies date back to the 1940s. Although readership studies are old, they are not set in their ways. As the needs of editors have changed, readership research has also changed to provide the kinds of information that editors now seek in order to help them make increasingly complex decisions. By themselves, readership studies are not enough to supply all of the information that editors need. But they do provide a foundation of basic knowledge on how people use newspapers, and they raise issues that identify needs for other kinds of research.

With these considerations in mind, the Star and Tribune launched a changed and expanded readership program in 1976. It was based on these assumptions:

- If readership and circulation are going to improve, the newspaper must be looked at as a whole. Special features and new sections should be part of an overall strategy for the entire newspaper.
- Priorities for changing newspapers should be based on the things that will make the most difference in readership. Identifying these key areas helps concentrate efforts where they will do the most good.
- Readership is a complex phenomenon. Many different aspects of stories interacting with one another go into determining readership levels. Analysis of readership results needs to take this interaction into account.
- Demographic analysis is a useful tool, but it may not be the best way to define specific target audiences for newspapers. People's reading patterns may provide a more useful basis for segmenting the market.
- Attitudes may be as important as readership in building a loyal circulation base. This includes the way people feel about individual stories as well as the way they feel about the newspaper as a whole. Attitude measures also should encompass what people feel a newspaper should contain as well as what they actually read.

Methodology

Given the complexity of these assumptions, it was necessary to develop an accurate measure of readership of the newspapers. Based on previous research, two things were determined to be necessary to achieve the desired accuracy.

First was same-day interviewing. This was necessary because people forget what they read in newspapers very quickly, causing the reliability of the readership information to decline rapidly as the time between readership and measurement of readership increases.

Second was unaided readership recall. This was judged necessary because people's egos are so involved in their readership behavior. If a person is asked whether he read the editorial page, he might say "yes" because he feels he should have read it. Because of this, the interviewing procedures allow the respondent to select items that were read without prompting.

The procedure that was developed to meet these objectives uses telephone interviewing on the issue of the newspaper published that day. A reader is asked to bring the newspaper to the telephone, page through it, and identify each item that he looked at or read.

For each story mentioned, the respondent is asked three questions:

1. How much of the item did you look at or read?
2. How concerned are you about the topic of the story?
3. How much more would you like to see in the newspaper on this topic?

These three questions were selected from about a dozen that were tested as measuring demonstrably different aspects of readership and intensity of readership. The questionnaire also includes demographic questions and two questions designed to measure overall newspaper loyalty.

Each item in every newspaper surveyed also is content analyzed. More than 50 content categories were developed in brainstorming sessions with reporters and editors on the aspects of news items that they thought might make a difference in readership. The categories include subject, length, layout, headline characteristics, amount of human interest, degree of feature treatment, placement in the newspaper, and many others.

Approximately 200 interviews are collected in each survey. To date, more than 80 surveys have been completed on our newspapers, with a total of more than 16,000 interviews. Results are combined for each newspaper, and most of the analysis uses aggregate data.

Caveats

Before any of the results of the project are discussed, a few points need to be made.

First, it's important to keep in mind that research is only one small part of the editorial decision-making process. Research results take their place along with news judgment, journalistic responsibility, intelligence, and creativity in efforts to produce a better newspaper. That's the way that the results have been used at the Star and Tribune—selectively and creatively, not mechanistically.

Second, the project reported here is a local one, and the results that we have obtained may not hold true elsewhere. Even locally, we found that many of the results for the evening Minneapolis Star were very different from those for the Sunday Tribune.

Third, useful information for editors has been produced at every stage of the project. Although it's tempting for researchers to search for final answers rather than supplying bits and pieces of useful information, the latter has been necessary for the continuing viability and visability of the project.

Kinds of Information Produced

Here, then, are some of the kinds of information that have been produced from the project:

1. For each newspaper surveyed, stickered newspapers are distributed in the newsrooms. Each item in these newspapers contains a sticker showing the readership of that item and its ranking among all items in that newspaper.

2. Reports on what the newspapers contain *and* what people read show how the newspapers allocate their space among different types of items; and they also report readership results for different kinds of stories. In a 1977 report of this type for the Star, it was discovered that there was an inverse relationship between the amount of space devoted to subjects and their readership, with the lowest-readership items taking up a lion's share of the news space. The report also noted that longer stories received better readership. Those two findings contributed to some reallocation of space in that newspaper.

3. "Who reads what" reports contain demographic analysis of the results. It was found in a 1977 report on the Star that reading patterns didn't differ substantially among different demographic groups. That led to the idea of using readership patterns themselves as a way to segment the newspaper audience into its various sub-audiences.

4. Reports on attitudes and readership describe both attitudes toward the newspaper as a whole and attitudes toward individual stories. Demographic groups with the greatest loyalty toward the Star turned out to differ from demographic groups with the highest readership levels. However, demographic groups with high readership levels were very similar to those with high subscribership levels. This indicates that readership may be a better predictor of subscripership than is loyalty.

   Attitudes toward individual stories also differed considerably from readership levels for those stories. For example, government stories had low readership, but high value, for readers. Conversely, stories about sex had high readership, but the readership tended to be superficial. This finding led to a proposal for space allocation guidelines based on three considerations:

   - The amount of space currently devoted to the type of story
   - The readership level of that type of story
   - The value readers place on that type of story

   For example, a recommendation to increase space would be made for types of stories that have high readership, high value for readers, and not much space currently devoted to them. Different combinations of these three factors lead to different recommendations. The guidelines and the space recommendations for each of the combinations are shown in Table 1.

5. The fifth application of the readership results has been used to evaluate new sections. The Minneapolis newspapers introduced seven new sections in the fall of 1977. Since then, several readership studies have been conducted on each of the newspapers containing one or more new sections. The new sections are evaluated according to whether they add to or detract from the overall readership of their newspapers, and also according to whether they attract high readership and/or loyalty among specific target groups.

6. Some work already has been done on determining reading patterns, and much more remains to be done. An early factor analysis was used to help make decisions on repackaging the Star.* The recommendation was that subjects that group together should be placed together in the newspaper so that people with a particular reading interest can easily find what they are looking for. *(An opposing view is that such stories should be*

*R factor analysis with varimax rotation was used

Table 1

Space Allocation Guidelines

1. Increase space for types of items with:

   Little space currently
   High value for readers
   High readership

2. Increase space, but not too much, for types of items with:

   Little space currently
   Low value for readers
   High readership

   Much space currently
   High value for readers
   High readership

3. Maintain space of types of items with:

   Much space currently
   Low value for readers
   High readership

   Little space currently
   High value for readers
   Low readership

4. Reduce space, but not too much, for types of items with:

   Much space currently
   High value for readers
   Low readership

5. Reduce space for types of items with:

   Much space currently
   Low value for readers
   Low readership

separated in order to force readers to page through the whole newspaper and be exposed to all of the advertising. This view was rejected on the grounds that time is at a premium for today's readers and that forcing readers through the entire newspaper can be counterproductive in terms of maintaining circulation.)

When stories were grouped via factor analysis for the Star, three major subject categories emerged. The "serious news" category contained stories about government and politics, business and labor items, editorial page items, stories on energy and the environment, and—to a lesser extent—sports items.

The "soft news" category contained stories about people and society, columns, comics and games, entertainment stories, consumer news, and weather information.

A "thrill-seekers" category contained stories about crime and law enforcement, stories about fires and disasters, stories about unusual or funny occurrences (the "man bits dog" type of story), and stories about science and medicine.

7. Analysis has been done on interacting readership patterns. The statistical technique used in this instance, regression analysis, allowed us to look at the way different characteristics of stories interact to produce certain readership levels.** The impact of each story characteristic on readership was weighed against the impact of all other significant characteristics. The result is a combination of characteristics that, when considered together, have the most impact on readership.

Overall, in the 25 surveys of the Star that were used to develop a regression equation, the readership of about two-thirds of the articles was estimated within five percentage points. When separate regression equations were developed for each subject, the readership of about three-fourths of the articles was estimated within five percentage points. The results were judged to be accurate enough to serve as a general guideline on readership.

Key indicators of readership varied quite a bit for different types of stories. Tables 2 through 5 show the results for four specific subjects.

For example, headline size is the most important characteristic for government stories, accounting for 22 percent of the variance in readership. This contrasts with stories about people, where the human interest element accounts for 71 percent of the variance in readership. In professional sports stories, length turns out to be the most important characteristic—possibly explained by the fact that one of the most popular sportswriters tends to write long stories.

Table 2

Regression Results for Government Stories

Characteristic	Percent Variance in Readership Explained
Headline size	22%
Page number	12%
Whether story contains human interest	7%
Section location	6%
Size of photo(s) accompanying story	3%
Headline quality	3%
Whether story involved the reader	2%
Whether the headlines name a person	2%
Whether the story is a profile	1%
Geographic location of story	1%
Total variance explained: 59%	

**Stepwise multiple regression was used

Table 3

Regression Results for People Stories

Characteristic	Percent Variance in Readership Explained
Whether the story contains human interest	71%
Whether the approach is background/ interpretation	6%
Size of photo(s) accompanying story	4%
Headline size	3%
Whether the item is a list	1%
Whether the item is a capsule/summary	1%
Geographic location of story	1%
Section location	1%

Total variance explained: 88%

Table 4

Regression Results for Pro Sports Stories

Characteristic	Percent Variance in Readership Explained
Length	42%
Whether writing approach is "feature"	8%
Geographic location of story	4%
Headline quality	2%
Section location	2%
Page number	6%
Whether headline names a person, refers to a person, and/or contains an emotional word	4%
Day of week	1%

Total variance explained: 69%

Table 5

Regression Results for Fire/Disaster Stories

Characteristic	Percent Variance in Readership Explained
Headline size	42%
Whether the story contains human interest	18%
Whether the story appeals to emotions	6%
Section location	3%
Page number	2%
Headline quality	2%
Length of story	2%
Whether the story involves the reader	2%

Total variance explained: 77%

At any rate, being able to isolate key characteristics like these means that efforts to improve readership can be concentrated in areas where they will do the most good—one of the major goals of the project.

The regression equations that have been developed for each subject have been programmed into the Star and Tribune computer. One of the programs produces stickered newspapers that contain readership estimates based on the regression equations as well as actual readership results from surveys. The program also is conversational, so that anyone can sit down at a computer terminal, answer a few questions about a particular story, and receive a readership estimate for that story.

Summing Up

Those are a few examples of the kinds of things that the readership program has produced so far. Much remains to be done. We plan to continue producing stickered newspapers and basic readership reports, since these have value for editors. We also plan to continue the research-and-development phase of the project. In addition, we are trying some additional variations on our basic readership studies.

One projct in the planning stages is a "split run" study in which characteristics that have been identified as having a bearing on readership would be varied in two editions of the same day's newspaper. The two editions would contain the same stories, but with different headlines, layout, graphics, writing styles, and other characteristics. Readership and attitudes would be measured and compared for the two editions.

Variations like these should help keep this readership project from becoming too set in its ways as it grows and matures.

Conclusions

The model provides an effective promotional tool. Positive attitudes that fit the model can be used in promotion campaigns to reinforce similar attitudes among present readers. Such reinforcement could help maintain or increase present readership levels. Among the less regular readers holding less favorable attitudes, such promotion might cause a re-evaluation of their position. Promotion alone, however, may not be sufficient to change negative attitudes and subsequently readership. In some cases, editorial evaluation and change may be necessary.

To summarize, this analysis has shown that certain attitudes and readership reinforce each other through the reader's overall satisfaction with the newspaper. Positive attitudes about aspects of the newspaper reinforce the propensity to read regularly and conversely, negative ones weaken it. Additionally, the more regularly a person reads the newspaper, the more likely he or she is to develop positive attitudes about it. It remains to be shown what other attitudes or readership measures fit this model.

The Basic Ottaway Plan

By Paula Poindexter and Robert Van Fleet

Paula Poindexter, who completed her Ph.D. at the School of Public Communications, Syracuse University, had major responsibility for the planning and execution of the surveys described here. She is now on the faculty of the School of Journalism at the University of Georgia. This research was under the overall direction of Robert Van Fleet, a vice-president of Ottaway Newspapers Inc., a subsidiary of the Dow Jones Company

In the summer of 1976, Ottaway Newspapers Inc., a group of small community dailies located in cities stretching from Cape Cod, Mass. to Medford, Ore., launched a two-year newspaper readership survey program in 13 newspaper markets. Newspaper readership surveys by large newspapers are commonplace. Readership surveys by small newspapers, while not as commonplace, are not unusual. So what makes the Ottaway readership surveys different? Eleven of the small dailies experimented with doing it themselves. The newspapers used a do-it-yourself procedure with consulting guidance from Syracuse University to obtain information about the readers and non-readers in their circulation areas.

Eleven do-it-yourself surveys were conducted over a period of 11 months beginning in July, 1976 in Sharon, Pa. and ending in June, 1977 in Medford, Ore. Subsequent analysis of the information collected continued through May, 1978 and culminated in a symposium of newspaper industry representatves at the Ottaway headquarters in Campbell Hall, N.Y. in May of that year.

Ottaway Strategy

The strategy developed by Ottaway Newspapers for its studies emphasizes the on-going value of a systematic program of research. The basic types of information to be collected were decided upon and the necessary technical expertise for conducting audience surveys was assembled.

From this start three phases of data analysis evolved, each yielding new information of increasing scope. First, individual reports were prepared for each newspaper. Next, a series of comparative reports were prepared, describing each newspaper's results in relation to each of the other Ottaway newspapers. In the final phase, which is still underway, new basic information was developed about newspaper audiences and their reading habits. In short, the results range from immediately applicable information (e.g., audience ratings of specific features in the newspaper) to basic knowledge about the newspaper audience (e.g., the extent to which readers feel obligated to keep up with the daily news).

The planning stage of the Ottaway readership surveys actually began one year prior to the launching of the first survey. Robert S. Van Fleet, a vice-president of Ottaway Newspapers, was assigned to plan and manage the surveys. To introduce himself to newspaper research, Van Fleet attended two research training sessions, one sponsored by ANPA/ASNE/INPA in Reston, Va., and the other at Ohio State University in Columbus, sponsored by ANPA.

Maxwell E. McCombs, director of the Communications Research Center, Syracuse University, consulted on the readership program and conducted a seminar to introduce the local survey directors to newspaper research five months before the first survey went into the field. The publisher at each participating newspaper had been previously asked to designate a local survey director who could be trained to supervise and execute the readership surveys in his community.

Paula M. Poindexter, then a Syracuse University graduate student, provided professional help in survey planning, data preparation and computer data analysis. Van Fleet and Poindexter traveled to each newspaper market to help draw the sample and to train interviewers and coders for the project.

Research Timetable

The execution of each of the 11 do-it-yourself surveys was based on the 14-week timetable described in Figure 1. The first week included a planning session with the publisher, the local survey director, all department heads and Van Fleet. After the initial planning session, the next six weeks were devoted to designing, pre-testing, revising and printing a half-hour questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information in seven major areas:

- Frequency of newspaper readership
- Which newspapers are read
- Which features are read
- What readers think of their newspaper

Figure 1

Timetable for a 14-week Community Survey

Weeks	1-2	Questionnaire design
Weeks	3-4	Pre-test and revise questionnaire
Weeks	4-5	Prepare universe, draw sample
Weeks	5-6	Print final questionnaire
Weeks	6-7	Hire and train interviewers
Weeks	6-7	Prepare interviewer kits
Weeks	8-10	Field survey
Weeks	9-11	Edit and code completed questionnaires
Weeks	12-13	Card punch and computer tabulation
Week	14	Report writing

- The shopping habits of the readers
- Why readers do or don't read a newspaper
- The education, age, income and sex of the readers

As the questionnaire was being revised, preparation for the drawing of the sample was beginning. By the fourth week, the sample was drawn. Most of the survey sites used a tax roll to select 500 to 650 participants. Instead of names, residential addresses were randomly picked. Both property owners and tenants had an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study. Males and females were also randomly selected.

During the sixth and seventh weeks, 15 to 20 local residents were hired and trained as interviewers. The field work began in the eighth week and was completed in the 10th week. Preparation of the data for the computer began as soon as the first questionnaires were completed. Coders were trained at the local newspaper to translate the responses into coded numerical values.

The coded data was prepared for the computer at Syracuse University during the 12th and 13th weeks. By the 14th week, the local survey directors had received computer printouts of their data from which they wrote local reports for their newspapers.

Analysis and Reports

The survey field work and local reports were finished by the end of the first year at the individual newspaper level, but by the second year, analysis, interpretation and reporting of the data had begun on a group-wide and industry level.

Because all of the newspapers carried a large proportion of identical questions, it was possible to compare the different markets at an Ottaway group level. Comparisons could be based on geographic region, size of the market or even whether a newspaper was published in the morning or afternoon. A group-wide analysis also made it possible to determine which newspapers in the group exceeded or fell short of the group norm in various areas.

Extra Dividends

The extra dividends from the Ottaway survey program began to appear after the first year. These extra dividends expanded the knowledge about newspaper readership and brought industry experts together at a symposium to discuss the findings in the Ottaway surveys, their implications, and the state of the art of newspaper research.

Four reports presented at the Ottaway Symposium in May 1978 sought to answer special questions about newspaper readers:

- How well do attitudes of newspaper readers predict how frequently they read the newspaper?
- Why do non-readers ignore the daily newspaper?
- How can an editor use a scientific procedure to determine which news features to keep and which to drop?
- How does a civic norm emphasizing the value of keeping informed influence how frequently people read the daily newspaper?

Another one of the "extra dividends" from this continuing phase appears as the final article in this ANPA News Research Report.

A Cost Comparison

The completion of the two-year, do-it-yourself, $90,000 Ottaway survey program raises another question. Was there really an advantage to the do-it-yourself method used? Was it worth the cost and effort?

To make a fair comparison Ottaway's News-Times in Danbury, Conn., hired a professional firm to conduct their survey rather than use their own personnel. With Danbury as a control, it became possible to make some observations about the two methods:

- The Danbury project, of course, did not place a heavy demand on the energies of the newspaper staff. But it cost more. The outlay for the professional job ran three-to-four times higher than the do-it-yourself projects.
- There was no effort made to have the Danbury questionnaire or methodology conform to the work at other locations. But about 30 items of information acquired (including demographics) *were* comparable.
- In virtually all cases, the Danbury results very closely matched results from other locations.

Conclusion

Probably the most important advantage of the do-it-yourself program is that 11 of the Ottaway newspapers now have personnel trained to do research. Since the survey program was introduced in the summer of 1976, a number of Ottaway newspapers have done a variety of follow-up research programs.

Audience Attitudes and Readership

By Robin Cobbey

Now with the News Research Department of Knight-Ridder Newspapers, Dr. Robin Cobbey was a graduate student at the School of Public Communications, Syracuse University, when this research was completed.

Editors are often interested in measuring attitudes their readers hold about the newspaper. An editor may want to know if the newspaper is perceived as a credible, accurate and adequate source of news. The primary value of research is to inform the editor and publisher of the particular dimensions on which the newspaper is perceived by readers as positive or negative.

Over time, research can alert the editor and publisher to negative trends. Strong positive perceptions of the newspaper also can effectively be used in promotion campaigns to reinforce positive attitudes among current readers and to stress strong aspects of the newspaper to the non-reading public.

An often overlooked question is whether reader perceptions have any bearing on readership. Do readers with positive attitudes about their daily newspaper read more regularly than those holding less positive or negative attitudes? Additionally, one must ask *how* perceptions influence reading. Do they influence the behavior directly? How strong is this influence?

Findings in Brief

- An analysis of 20 perceptual questions showed that 12 different attitudes, plus overall reader satisfaction, were represented.
- Attitudes were found to have an indirect affect on readership, making their impact through the reader's satisfacton with the newspaper
- Attitudes which had the strongest impact on a reader's satisfaction were accuracy, balance of good and bad news, agreement with editorial page advice, and adequacy of local government coverage
- Attitudes which had no influence on satisfaction included those on the morality of the newspaper, the believability of its advertising, the adequacy of its state government coverage, and the representativeness of its local coverage.

Methodology

The data examined here come from a series of readership surveys conducted for Ottaway Newspapers Inc., a subsidiary of Dow Jones and Co., Inc. Personal interviews were conducted between July, 1976 and May, 1977 with readers of 11 daily newspapers. The combined data base of approximately 6,000 persons represents readers from small cities.

Each of the surveys contained a set of 20 questions about the person's local daily newspaper. Seventeen dealt with reader attitudes on specific attributes of the newspaper such as the accuracy, adequacy and quality of various content, and the believability and responsibility of advertising. Three questions were specifically designed to measure the reader's satisfaction with the newspaper, whether, for example, he/she would miss the newspaper if it were not available or would recommend the newspaper to a friend.

These 20 questions were entered into a factor analysis to determine the actual number of different dimensions represented.* Items which factored together were assumed to be tapping a single underlying dimension and were combined to form a single measure. Items which did not meet the minimum loading criterion of .40 and were not assigned to a factor were assumed to be tapping a separate dimension.

Results

The factor analysis showed readers to be expressing 12 separate attitudes about their daily newspaper in addition to their overall satisfaction with it. The attitudes concern such attributes of the newspaper as the accuracy of content, the adequacy of coverage on local and state government, the balance between good and bad news and responsibility for and believability of advertising content. Table 1 provides a summary of these 12 attitudes. In addition to these attitudes, three questions were found to top the reader's overall satisfaction with the newspaper.

What makes a reader satisfied with his or her daily newspaper? Which of the attitudes have the greatest influence on reader satisfaction?

To answer these questions, the 12 attitude questions were entered into a multiple regression to statistically determine the relative influence of each on reader satisfaction. The results summarized in Table 2 show two attitudes, those concerning accuracy of content and balance between good and bad news, to exert the most influence on satisfaction. That is, readers who see their daily newspaper as being accurate and presenting good news as well as bad tend to be more satisfied with their daily newspaper; conversely, readers who evaluate their newspaper negatively on these two attributes, tend to be less satisfied.

Some attitudes, such as those on local and area coverage and coverage of local government, were found

*The Varimax procedure for SPSS was used

Table 1

Attitudes Found Among Readers

- Accuracy of content: Local and area news; headlines; clarity of writing; presenting both sides of an issue
- Local coverage: quantity of local and area news; reporting crimes in the area
- Representativeness of local coverage: coverage of local people
- Adequacy of local government coverage
- Adequacy of state government coverage
- Quantity of national and international news
- Balance between good and bad news
- Acceptance of editorial page advice
- Advertising believability
- Responsibility for advertising
- Freedom from pressure by advertisers
- Morality: use of violent photographs; paper's suitability for children and teenagers

to have only moderate influence on satisfaction. Attitudes on such attributes as the believability of advertising content, state government coverage and the adequacy of national and international news, were found to have no impact.

Effects on Readership

How are a reader's attitudes and satisfaction related to readership? Further analysis revealed that there also is a relationship between satisfaction and readership, with more satisfied readers tending to read more regularly.

At this point a casual ordering of the variables can be hypothesized. Specific attitudes influence the reader's satisfaction with the newspaper and this in turn influences readership. This model can be diagrammed as:

Attitude → Satisfaction → Newspaper Reading

To test this model, *perceived accuracy* of the newspaper was selected as the attitude measure because the earlier analysis showed it to be one of the more clearly defined attitude factors as well as the strongest predictor of satisfaction in the regression analysis.

Detailed testing of the relationships among these three variables—perceived accuracy of the newspaper, overall reader satisfaction and frequency of readership—verified the model. High perceived accuracy leads to high satisfaction which in turn causes frequent reading. Conversely, low perceived accuracy leads to low satisfaction which in turn causes infrequent reading.

Table 2

Relative Influence of Attitudes on a Reader's Satisfaction with the Daily Newspaper

Most Influence:

Accuracy of content
Balance of good and bad news

Moderate Influence:

Accept editorial page advice
Adequacy of local government coverage
Responsiblity for advertising
Local coverage
Freedom from pressure by advertisers

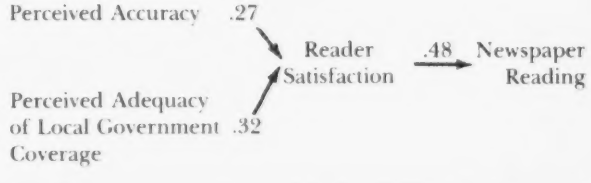
Little or No Influence

Quantity of national and international news
Morality
State government coverage
Advertising believability
Representativeness of local coverage

Additional analysis revealed that attitudes concerning the *adequacy of local government coverage* fit the same model. Readers who find local government affairs to be covered adequately in their newspaper are more satisfied readers and tend to read more regularly.

The combined model relating attitudes to readership is described in Figure 1. The association* between reader satisfaction and readership is stronger than either of the two attitudes with satisfaction. This might be interpreted as illustating combined impact of attitudes on readership. In other words, many attitudes may contribute to the degree of satisfaction a reader has with the newspaper. Negative attitudes may cancel to some degree the influence of more positive attitudes. However, in combination through the reader's satisfaction, they make a stronger impact on reading.

Figure 1



*From a series of cross-tabulations, the zero order and first and second order partial gammas were computed.

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